



North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation

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Michael F. Easley
Governor

June 2007

Volume 21 Number 3

William G. Ross Jr.
Secretary, DENR

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CHIMNEY ROCK JOINS STATE PARKS

Gov. Mike Easley announced May 21 that the State of North Carolina closed on the \$24 million purchase of Chimney Rock Park, adding the natural attraction in Rutherford County to a new state park under development in the Hickory Nut Gorge.

"Chimney Rock is a cherished landmark in North Carolina, and this represents

a landmark acquisition for the state parks system and the cause of conservation in our state," Easley said. "The state is honored to accept the stewardship of this important natural resource."

Gov. Easley announced the state's intention in January to purchase Chimney Rock Park from the Morse family descendants of the attraction's

founder, Lucius B. Morse.

The acquisition is funded with a \$15 million appropriation from the General Assembly, \$4.85 million from the Parks and Recreation, Natural Heritage and Clean Water Management trust funds and \$2.35 million from a private donor.

The transfer of the

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MASTER PLANS MANAGE PARKS' FUTURE

State parks are eternal, right? They'll be there, virtually unchanged, forever for everyone to enjoy.

Well, yes and no. They'll be there, but everything must change.

The streams and waterfalls, forests and rock outcrops of South Mountains State Park, for instance, are very nearly the same as when the park was created in the 1970s. In some ways, they've returned to a more natural state as signs of human intervention gradually fade.

But in other ways, it's a very different park.

During the past 30 years, the park nearly doubled in size to become the largest in North Carolina. Waves of new visitors with new expectations are drawn to it. It was chosen as the site for the parks system's third environmental education center.

Those are some of the reasons why a new master plan is being developed for the 17,448 acres that sprawl across three watersheds in the rugged hills of southern Burke County.

The original master plan for the park was



Clear Creek Area is graced by a small lake.

written in 1979, and a plan's expected shelf life is 20-25 years.

A master plan is a critical document for a state park. It reflects how the park will be used and what activities will be allowed and where. It's a guide for placing buildings and parking lots and roads.

It determines what a park will look like and what it feels like.

"It's all about the character of a park," said Elizabeth Chesnut, planner for the state parks system. "We try to respect and enhance the character

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From The Director's Desk

I firmly believe citizens throughout North Carolina share in our pride and sense of accomplishment in formally adding Chimney Rock Park to the state parks system. Todd and Lu Morse (and their family-owned Chimney Rock Company Management LLC) have been gracious throughout this acquisition. Their help and that of their employees will be invaluable over the next couple of years as that company continues to operate the park so the public can enjoy it without interruption.

Now, we roll up our sleeves and continue with even more deliberate work. The division must develop a master plan for this new state park in Hickory Nut Gorge that has already grown to more than 3,000 acres. We'll be relying again on our friends and partners such as the land conservancies in that area, the local governments and perhaps most importantly, the public and neighbors of the park. We intend to make the master planning process as inclusive as possible.

A fairly short ride from the gorge at South Mountains, we are in the late stages of developing a new master plan for that state park that covers nearly 18,000 acres and that will incorporate our third environmental education center in partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services. Elsewhere in *The Steward*, you can read about that process and about why master plans are so important to state parks.

An important part of that process was a public meeting in Morganton where we had some frank and valuable discussion among visitors and staff about the future of this largest of state parks. The feedback we received there and in letters and emails during a public comment period will be carefully considered. Creating a great state park demands conversation and cooperation among all concerned.

I'll also mention in passing the pending authorization by the General Assembly of the Deep River State Trail in central North Carolina. In some ways, this is a new concept and direction for the state parks system. Over the coming months, we'll be looking for still more feedback about this proposal and will be anxious to develop new partnerships with local governments and stakeholders in a five-county area. It's an exciting prospect.

In the last four years, I've noted the retirements of many passionate and competent parks professionals. Another "parks" professional, Joe Henderson, has retired (see page 14). During his career in state government, he was instrumental in the acquisition and conservation of many lands in North Carolina, which citizens will enjoy for generations to come. Thank you, Joe!

Sincerely,



Lewis Ledford

UP CLOSE AND 'PERSONNEL'

Kandi Zinn is a new park ranger at Kerr Lake State Recreation Area. She attended high school in Bedford, Va., and holds a bachelor's degree in zoology from N.C. State University.

Garry Hoover is a new maintenance mechanic at Hanging Rock State Park. He has more than 20 years of related experience and has worked at the park as a general utility worker. He attended high school in Pennsylvania.

Martha Flanagan is the new interpretation and education specialist for the south district. She attended Millbrook High School in Raleigh and holds a bachelor's degree in biology from UNC-Chapel Hill and a master's degree in zoology from N.C. State University. She was previously lead ecologist for the Raleigh Parks and Recreation Department and taught zoology.

William Davis has joined the staff of Cliffs of the Neuse State Park as a maintenance mechanic. He has more than 30 years of related experience and has served since 1975 in the National Guard. He attended high school in Pikeville.

Samuel Koch is a new park ranger at Crowders Mountain State Park. He is a 1998 graduate of North Stokes High School and received an associate's degree in fish and wildlife management technology from Haywood Community College. He has worked as a seasonal employee at Hanging Rock State Park.

Kelly Ondek has joined the staff of William B. Umstead State Park as a ranger. She attended high school in

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STATE PARKS LICENSE PLATES AVAILABLE

Friends and supporters of North Carolina's state parks and of conservation will soon be able to publicize that support with a "Naturally Wonderful" state parks license plate.

The Division of Parks and Recreation is accepting applications and payment for the first 300 license plates that feature an outdoor recreation design theme in blue, green and black.

There is a \$30 fee for the plate in addition to regular license fees of the Division of Motor Vehicles. The fee is \$60 for a personalized state parks plate. The additional fee will be evenly divided between North Carolina's Parks and Recreation Trust Fund and the Natural Heritage Trust Fund.

The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund supports land acquisition and capital improvements in state parks as well as a grant program for local parks and a coastal beach access program.



The Natural Heritage Trust Fund supports land acquisition and inventory programs to protect species and their habitats.

Grants from both funds are often combined for state park land acquisition projects.

"We have many partners and supporters throughout the state and this is a special way for them to display their pride in the variety and richness of North Carolina's state parks and natural resources," said Lewis Ledford, director of the division. "It's also an op-

portunity for all of us to support important conservation efforts."

Once the minimum 300 initial applications are received, processing and mailing of the new plates should begin within 90 days, and thereafter, plates will be produced and mailed directly from the Division of Motor Vehicles.

Plates can also be purchased for "weighted" vehicles, including buses and camping trailers from 7,000 to 26,000 pounds. The plate will not be marked "weighted," but the registration will indicate its status.

To view the license plate design in color and download an application, go to the division's web site at www.ncsparks.net. Or, write: Adrienne McCoig, N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation, 1615 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC, 27699-1615.

FIND AN APPLICATION FOR A STATE PARKS LICENSE PLATE ON OUR WEBSITE

WWW.NCSPARKS.NET

OR, WRITE:

ADRIENNE McCOIG

N.C. DIVISION OF PARKS AND RECREATION

1615 MAIL SERVICE CENTER

RALEIGH NC 27699-1615

PERSONNEL

Roselle, IL, and earned a bachelor's degree in ecology from Northern Michigan University. She previously worked at recreation departments in Cary and Raleigh.

Amy Duggins is a new park ranger at Eno River State Park. She attended high

school in Morristown, Tenn., and holds a bachelor's degree in music from Colorado College in Colorado Springs. She has worked as a field researcher and as an interpretive ranger in Colorado and Tennessee.

Krista Yantis has joined the staff of Morrow

Mountain State Park as a ranger. She attended high school in Casstown, Ohio, and earned a bachelor's degree in environmental science from Catawba College. She has worked as a technician for the Division of Air Quality and as a biology teacher in Rowan County.

TRUST FUND SOURCE OF 39 GRANTS

The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Authority awarded \$13 million in grants to 39 local governments for park projects at its May meeting in Raleigh.

That total represents revenues for the first three quarters of the fiscal year into that portion of the trust fund set aside for local grants. The authority will meet in July to award grants from fourth-quarter revenues.

About 50 representatives of local governments attended the meeting in the Archdale Building. It was the first time in 10 years that the authority had met at the headquarters of the state parks system, which administers the program, said Chairman Jonathan Howes.

Howes praised the local government officials for support of the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, which has been responsible for 526 grants totaling \$105.5 million during its history.

"Your calling on your local legislative delegation makes a big difference in their approval of this fund and makes a big difference in parks and recreation across the state," Howes said.

The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund was established in 1994 when the General Assembly

dedicated 75 percent of the state's share of the excise tax on real estate deed transfers.

The revenue is distributed to three programs: 65 percent to the state parks system for capital projects and land acquisition; 40 percent for matching grants to local governments; and 5 percent to the coastal beach access program.

Fourteen of the grant awards were at or very near the \$500,000 maximum, although all of the 39 successful applications were from mid-size towns or small communities. That indicates that more small towns and communities are tackling larger projects with the help of the fund.

Lewis Ledford, director of the division, told authority members that the state will also receive about \$650,000 this year for local grants through the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Some of the applicants unsuccessful for trust fund grants in May could qualify for that funding he said.

He added that the N.C. House budget proposal includes a measure to begin putting interest income back into the trust fund. If given final approval, that step could increase the fund by several percentage points each year.

LAND ACQUISITIONS GET APPROVAL

NAGS HEAD – The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Authority approved \$4.75 million to acquire 11 key tracts, including several at some of the state parks system's newest units.

Meeting March 30 at Jockey's Ridge State Park, the authority approved \$1.5 million to acquire 104 acres at Hickory Nut Gorge State Park. The tract includes significant natural heritage areas and adjoins Chimney Rock Park and the recently acquired World's Edge property in Rutherford County. Hickory Nut Gorge State Park was authorized in 2005.

Funding to acquire land at Lea Island State Natural Area at South Topsail Beach received support from the authority. The 2000 General Assembly authorized the natural area to protect the undeveloped barrier islands in Pender County.

The area is key for colonial nesting birds such as the federally listed piping plover. The \$1.05 million will be used to acquire property on the southern tip of Topsail Island for protection of the nesting birds and for low impact beach recreation.

The authority approved \$220,000 to purchase three tracts totaling 30 acres at Elk Knob State Natural Area in Watauga and Ashe counties.



Authority members tour Jockey's Ridge.

The acquisitions will allow staff to improve management of this section of the natural area, which was established in 2000, and also protect small headwater streams flowing into the North Fork of the New River.

The authority approved \$270,000 for two tracts totaling 48 acres at Sandy Run Savannas State Natural Area in Onslow and Pender counties. The Sandy Run area, authorized in 2006, is part of one of the largest, nearly contiguous natural area complexes in North Carolina.

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TRUSTEES MAP CONSERVATION PLAN

At their second annual combined meeting in March, trustees of North Carolina's four conservation trust funds offered ideas on how to make a new strategic conservation plan work.

Improved mapping that identifies critical habitats, key conservation areas and potential threats would help the four trust funds work in concert to meet strategic conservation goals, the trustees said.

Add to that: methods to monitor progress; ideas to draw support from the public and local

government; and a "working lands" component focused on agricultural and timber lands.

The two-day conference in Raleigh brought together trustees from the Natural Heritage, Parks and Recreation, Clean Water Management and Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation trust funds. Together in 2006, three of the four funds directed nearly \$150 million in grants for land acquisition and clean water projects.

The Agricultural and Farmland Preservation

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TRUST FUND

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The area contains examples of savannas, which have little representation in the state parks system. The tracts in the project will help protect the Sandy Run stream corridor.

Authority members approved \$1.7 million to acquire four tracts at William B. Umstead and Eno River state parks in the Triangle. The Eno River property adjoins existing state park land on the river downstream of the Lawrence Road Crossing.

At William B. Umstead, where land protection opportunities are quite limited, funds will be used for resource protection and as a link to the local greenway system.

The authority also approved the reallocation of \$800,000 to support the acquisition of three tracts totaling 90 acres at Mountain Bog State Natural Area in Avery County. The natural area was created in 2006 after it was identified in the "New Parks for a New Century" initiative as under-represented in the state parks system. It contains examples of the very rare southern Appalachian bog natural community.

The funding was originally intended for land acquisition at Lake Waccamaw State Park, where desired property was sold to a third-party.

In other business, the authority authorized the division staff to seek public comment on a proposed conversion policy for local government parks and recreation projects financed by the trust fund.

Much like the federal Land and Water Conservation Program – after which PARTF is patterned – the conversion process would provide a mechanism to offset or replace grant-funded land or facilities that may be converted to a use other than public recreation.

The conversion policy, which is recommended by the division's legal counsel, would only be available in cases where the public recreation loss is fully documented as unavoidable.

Lewis Ledford, director of the Division of Parks and Recreation, gave authority members a division status report and update on legislation in the General Assembly.

"This purchase may have been the most high visibility acquisition in the state parks system's history," Ledford said in describing Gov. Mike Easley's announcement earlier this year of the state's intent to purchase the 996-acre Chimney Rock Park as an addition to Hickory Nut Gorge State Park in Rutherford County.

"The people in the community and others not so nearby clearly wanted this property saved," he said. "We are working through the management transition and still plan to close on the property in May."

Ledford then summarized dozens of bills submitted since the legislature began work in January.

"A number of bills that support the division, our mission and land and water conservation have been submitted. This has already been a very busy session for bills, with them being submitted at a record-setting pace," he said.

The board also received an update on the coastal beach access program from John Thayer, manager of planning/public access for the Division of Coastal Management. A portion of PARTF is the primary funding source for the Public Beach and Coastal Waterfront Access Program administered by that division.

The program offers matching grants to local governments throughout North Carolina's 20 coastal counties.

The board meeting concluded on March 31 with Debo Cox, a ranger at Jockey's Ridge State Park, delivering an insightful program about the park and its facilities, followed by a tour and a trip up the sand dune.

DEEP RIVER STATE TRAIL PROPOSED

Companion bills have been introduced in the General Assembly to establish the Deep River State Trail, a regional project of the state parks system that would open the area to recreation and offer opportunities to protect the natural and cultural resources of the river corridor in central North Carolina.

Senate Bill 1431 was sponsored by Sen. Bob Atwater and co-sponsors of House Bill 1811 are Harold J. Brubaker and Verla Insko.

As envisioned, the Deep River State Trail would emerge as a land-based and paddle trail – with access and recreation facilities along the river and its tributaries – beginning at the river's headwaters near High Point in Guilford County and extending through Randolph, Moore and Chatham counties to the confluence of the Deep and Haw rivers in Lee County.

A state trail is a recognized type of unit of the state parks system. As authorized by legislation, it defines an area often larger and more linear in scope than a traditional state park.

The intent is to create an area jointly planned, acquired, developed and managed by a partnership of the parks system, other state and federal agencies, local governments and land conservancies.

The Deep River State Trail could become the backbone of an extended regional trails system with connections to Greensboro, Asheboro, the N.C. Zoological Park and Jordan Lake, and could eventually be extended down the Cape Fear River to Raven Rock State Park and beyond.



The Deep River in central North Carolina is gaining in popularity with paddlers and sportsmen.

"We have a tremendous opportunity here to combine the talents of many agencies, levels of government and non-profit groups in a wide-ranging partnership," said Lewis Ledford, director of the state parks system. "The result can be a model for protecting natural resources in a region as well as developing recreation and ecotourism."

Long popular with paddlers and fishermen, the Deep River offers a corridor with potential for linking conservation lands, cultural resources and recreation opportunities in a five-county area.

The river is considered nationally significant for its biological resources including a globally rare fish species (Cape Fear shiner) and mussel (Atlantic pigtoe).

Along the river's edge, scenic bluffs and rock outcrops alternate with areas of high-quality floodplain forests. Its low-density development offers opportunities for valuable wildlife and riparian corridors.

The Deep River was significant in the history and development of piedmont North Carolina. Sites along the corridor include evidence of a 19th century mill economy, a canal/lock system for navigation, the Civil War-era Endor iron furnace and the Deep River coal field, site of the 1925 Coal Glen mine disaster.

Midway along the corridor is the House in the Horseshoe State Historic Site, an 18th century plantation and site of a Revolutionary War skirmish.

Adding a Deep River State Trail unit to the state parks system would authorize the Division of Parks and Recreation to:

- Collaborate with local governments, landowners, nonprofit organizations and other stakeholders to develop a comprehensive plan for the Deep River State Trail;

- Acquire and manage some of the lands necessary for principal public access areas and support facilities along the

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DEEP RIVER

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trail corridor;

(Management of division lands would be similar to that of state parks and state natural areas, under the direction of the park superintendent with assistance from park rangers,)

-And, promote encourage and assist the establishment of trail segments and access areas on lands managed by other government agencies and nonprofit organizations in order to form a continuous trail within the river corridor.

The Deep River State Trail would likely begin as a canoe/paddling trail, with a series of public access sites, reaching from near the Randleman Lake Dam downstream to the confluence of the Deep and

Haw rivers. Significant public and conservancy land holdings already exist in the corridor and some of these lands could serve as the first public access areas.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources manages 952 acres along the river, much of it initially acquired by the Triangle Land Conservancy.

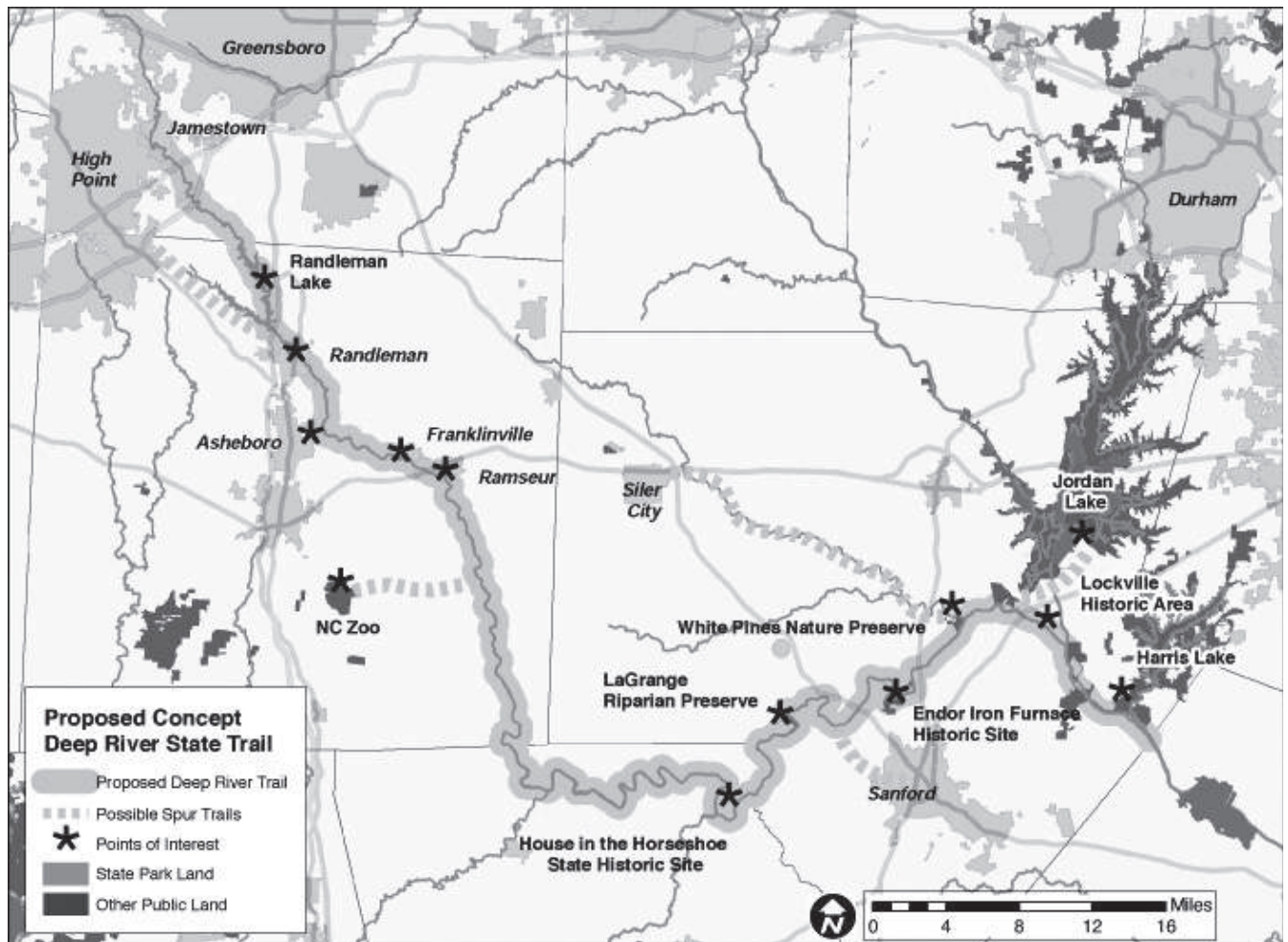
The Department of Cultural Resources manages over 400 acres at the House in the Horseshoe and Endor Iron Furnace. And, the Triangle Land Conservancy owns 583 acres, including White Pines Nature Preserve and La Grange Riparian Preserve.

If the legislation is approved authorizing the trail,

the state parks system will bring together involved local governments, nonprofit organizations, landowners and interested citizens to begin developing a comprehensive plan for the state trail.

Participation in the project will be voluntary and private property rights will be respected.

Funding sources for land acquisition will likely include the Parks and Recreation, Natural Heritage and Clean Water Management trust funds. Facilities on state parks system lands would qualify for support from that portion of the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund dedicated to state parks capital projects.



MASTER PLAN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

that made this land attractive to begin with as a state park."

Planners take a good hard look at the land, taking inventory of its natural features, its plant and animal species, its existing facilities if there are any and the types of activities it invites.

It's visionary work and practical at the same time.

"Our goal is not just to locate facilities," Chesnut said. "We need to locate them in a way that is sensitive to the natural resources and in a way that makes sense from a building perspective."

South Mountains is known for rough terrain, dazzling trout streams and acres of forest never developed. It often lures long-distance hikers, experienced backpackers and trout fishermen, those seasoned folks who love the "backcountry."

Contrast that with a park such as Fort Macon on the southeast coast. It's compact at 424 acres, but draws more than a million visitors a year with its Civil War history, beach scene and surf fishing.

A master plan must be tailored to a park's natural resources and natural attractions.

Tastes change as well.

"There's a different value system now," said David Swanson, who owns a landscape design firm in Chapel Hill. "In the '70s, maybe you'd just build a lake for recreational use with a beach and a bathhouse. Now, you might design less for such active recreational use and more for enjoyment of the natural beauty of the land."

"We're seeing more and more things threatened and feel more need to preserve."

Swanson was chosen to produce the new master plan at South Mountains. His company has prior experience with the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences, the North Carolina Museum of Art and the state zoo. But, this project is on a much larger scale.

Just gathering information about South Mountains' natural resources, habitats, geology and landscape took more than four months of the year-long project.

An active outdoorsman, Swanson was drawn to the project for other reasons.

"That we're able to go through a design process that enables the public to benefit from public land is intriguing to us as designers," he said. The plan must determine how to get that public into the park to enjoy it, "but, otherwise we're putting a very light footprint on the land."

The planners said that South Mountains



Janice Branstrom makes a comment during a public meeting on the proposed plan. Planner Elizabeth Chesnut, standing at rear, and other division staff listen to discussion.

begs to keep its backcountry mystique. But beyond that, the park presented at least two very different challenges.

Its eastern side – called the Jacob's Fork Area – was the first to be developed with amenities strung through the river's narrow gorge. The same rough-hewn landscape and tumbling water that lures outdoorsmen has made development very difficult.

Swanson's draft plan would improve what's there now -- upgrading an equestrian center, adding picnic areas and trails near a new visitor center, expanding a cramped campground across Jacob's Fork and carving out more space for maintenance buildings.

If one particular parcel of adjacent land can be acquired, there is potential for more camping amenities.

It's the park's western reaches that put a glint in a planner's eyes.

In 2000, the Department of Agriculture transferred 2,556 acres to the park formerly known as the Broughton Watershed. That was followed in 2003 by the transfer of 450 acres from the Department of Health and Human Services.

The latter transfer was accompanied by a pledge from the agencies to jointly create a residential environmental education center that would serve all citizens, but offer state-of-the-art accessibility features for special needs populations.

The property – now called the Clear Creek Area – is an expansive bowl rimmed by South Mountains peaks and accented by a 20-acre lake.

The Clear Creek Area is an easy ride from Interstate 40 and US 64, giving the park a potential

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CHIMNEY ROCK

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996-acre property is accompanied by an agreement under which the Morse family, through its Chimney Rock Company Management LLC, will continue to operate the park through 2009 in a manner similar to its current operation, including charging an admission fee, offering special events and staying open on a year-round basis.

Beginning in 2008, the state will receive a licensing fee based on a percentage of gross revenues.

During that period, the Division of Parks and Recreation will continue land acquisition efforts and develop a master plan for the larger state park that encompasses Chimney Rock, said Director Lewis Ledford.

"We will continue to work with the local community, the trust funds and the legislature to create a state park that will be a legacy," Ledford said. "The short term goal is to ensure a seamless transfer of Chimney Rock into the state parks system with no interruption to the public's access or to the tourism economy of that area."

The park has grown to more than 3,200 acres spanning both sides of the gorge, and includes the World's Edge property southwest of Chimney Rock. It may eventually include proper-

ties on Rumbling Bald Mountain now held by The Nature Conservancy.

Easley applauded the decision by the Morse family and Todd Morse, president and general manager of the attraction, to continue to be involved in the process.

"Members of the Morse family have been both careful stewards and successful managers of this property for more than 100 years," Easley said. "The state is fortunate to have their help now so that the public can continue to enjoy this attraction while we carefully plan and work toward building a world class state park."

Chimney Rock Park began as a private nature attraction in 1902. Its dominant feature is a 315-foot-tall rock spire that offers 75-mile views. The park also has a nature center and a network of hiking trails leading to unusual geologic features and the 404-foot Hickory Nut Falls.

The state has received significant help in piecing together the new state park from The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy, the Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy and the Foothills Conservancy as well as supporters in the local community.

MASTER PLAN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

new gateway in the west.

"We have more of a clean slate over on the western portion where we don't have any facilities now," Chesnut said.

Swanson's draft plan sites an environmental education center overlooking the lake with a short walk to group cabins and a dining hall. Group campsites are nearby and the area is laced with gentle trails with special needs groups and children in mind.

New picnic grounds would be installed near the western entrance, and a fishing pier and overlooks would highlight a lakeside trail.

Swanson's plans were produced only after much discussion.

Chesnut arranged a series of meetings with him and division staff and park staff over the past months, resulting in constant revision.

The draft plan was reviewed by the park's citizens advisory committee and in May, it was unveiled at a public meeting in Morganton. Generally, it got good reviews although equestrians lobbied for more trail access and the division agreed to review that aspect.

Chesnut said the process of creating a master plan is one of making decisions, moving from the general to the very specific. Early on, the division must decide if newly acquired land is to be a state natural area, a recreation area or a state park, and if a park, what kind of park.

Then, there's the "standard equipment" that must be installed – infrastructure such as entrance roads, parking areas, utilities, day-use areas, offices and maintenance barns.

The "fun stuff" comes later, she said, such as visitor centers, exhibits, hiking trails, boating access, fishing piers and overlooks.

Throughout, parks superintendents and rangers can offer insight, she said. In established parks, they know the history, the local culture and ways the park is used by the community.

"They can give us an idea why a park was laid out the way it was and what's possible for the future," she said. "And, it's so important to design things so they can be managed."

But at the same time, a master plan presents a "consistent vision" for a park that's maintained no matter who's in charge, she said.

BENTON RETIRES FROM PARKS CAREER

If state park superintendents were presidents, Tim Benton would be Calvin Coolidge.

Like Coolidge, Benton is renowned as a man of very few words.

But his colleagues had plenty to say about the superintendent of Lake James State Park who retired in May, capping a 26-year career with the state parks system. About 50 of Benton's friends and coworkers and family attended a retirement luncheon in Marion May 18.

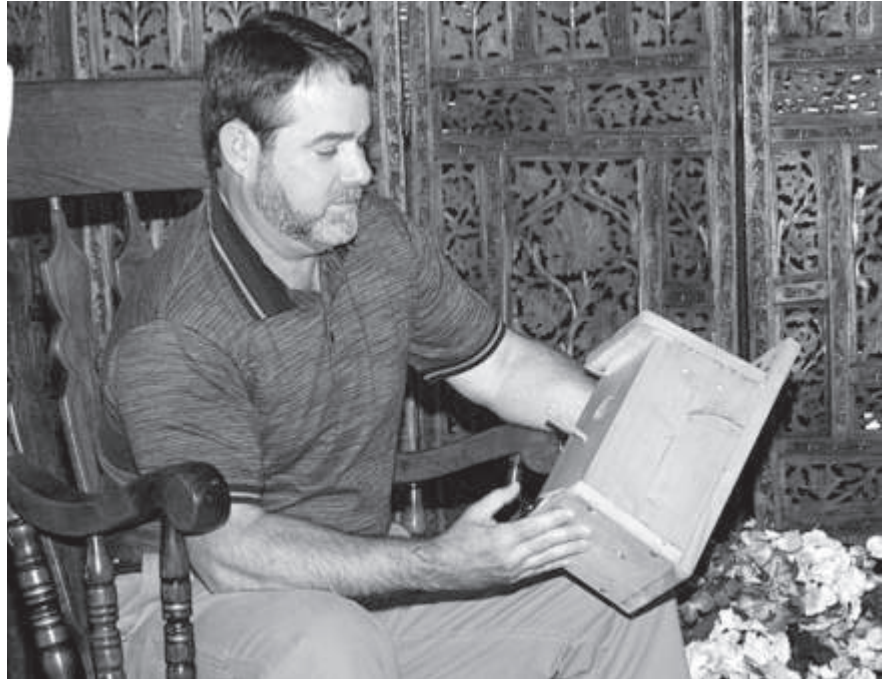
"Maybe you weren't saying a lot, Tim, but you were doing a lot. No matter how successful the division is now, it's largely due to the work people such as you did before," said Lewis Ledford, director of the Division of Parks and Recreation.

"Lake James will long be better because of the work you've done here."

A native of Greensboro, Benton attended NC State University, graduating in 1978 with a bachelor's degree in parks and recreation management. He worked as a seasonal employee at Hanging Rock State Park and spent almost three years with YACC, a federal volunteer program for outdoor recreation, waiting for an opening in the parks system.

In 1981, he was hired as a ranger at Hanging Rock, and later was given a promotion and a new assignment at the newly established Falls Lake State Recreation Area.

South District Superintendent Jud Burns said Benton was the first seasonal employee working for him at Hanging Rock and his first full-time ranger at Falls Lake, and he



At a retirement luncheon, Benton examines a bird house that holds a 'nest egg' of contributions from his coworkers.

made an impression.

"Tim shared that devotion for the state parks mission," Burns said.

Benton went to Lake James as its first superintendent when it was established in 1987, a period when material support for state parks operations and facilities was at a low ebb. The community, however, was very excited about the small 565-acre park. It offered rare public access to the mountain lake surrounded by Duke Power Co. land.

The modest campground and small swimming area in the park eventually attracted more than 400,000 people a year.

Retired ranger Roy Rodgers, who worked for Benton in those early days of the park, said the two would work together for hours sometimes with Benton rarely saying a word.

"I wondered if he just expected us to go ahead and do

the right thing," Rodgers said.

In 2004, the park offered Benton a different challenge as the state and Crescent Resources Inc. agreed to the acquisition of nearly 3,000 acres on the lake's north shore.

Benton served as the parks system's face in the community during long and complex negotiations involving land conservancies, Burke County government, local recreation interests and other state and federal agencies.

After the acquisition, another round of hard work began as a master plan was developed for the new property, boundaries were marked and patrols began of about 24 miles of lakefront property.

For his part, Benton said only that he enjoyed the variety of tasks that came with being a park ranger.

"I learned how to protect the environment and manage people."

TEAMWORK LAUNCHES DREDGING JOB

Rapid assistance from sister agencies, teamwork by state parks system administrators and a blizzard of paperwork launched an emergency dredging project in the channel route to Bear Island at Hammocks Beach State Park.

The result is that park visitors should have no problems reaching the popular, unspoiled barrier island during this summer season.

Contractors removed about 24,000 cubic yards of sand that had infiltrated Cow Channel, essentially closing the route to the park's passenger ferries during low tides or periods of high winds. The sand was used to renourish dunes near the island's bathhouse.

The Division of Water Resources identified \$800,000 to fund the project.

For several years, the division has been planning an extensive dredging project for Cow Channel, a one-mile approach from the Intracoastal Waterway to the island. That project remains scheduled for the winter of 2007/08.

Part of the process for any dredging project is arranging for an intricate latticework of permits from both state and federal agencies.

During the winter, park rangers noticed an unexpected



Park Superintendent Paul Donnelly, left, and David Timpy of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers watch pumping progress.

amount of sand infiltration in the channel. The parks system decided to seek emergency permitting from the state's Divisions of Coastal Management, Marine Fisheries and Water Quality, the Wildlife Resources Commission and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Under the Coastal Area Management Act, dredging is normally permitted only from mid-November through March.

The emergency permits were granted in late March and the dredging was completed by the Memorial Day weekend.

The park remains committed to the larger dredging project in the winter of 2007-08, which calls for 4,900 linear feet of the channel to be cleared

to a width of 50 feet and a depth of nine feet. To help fund that effort, a \$400,000 grant has been set aside from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.

"We are extremely grateful to the permitting agencies for their timely help in addressing a critical problem at Hammocks Beach," Lewis Ledford, director of the division, said. "We've also had important support from the local community. These combined efforts allowed the park to reopen the island and restore ferry service with minimal disruption of the busy tourist season."

Shoaling in Cow Channel has been constant since ferry operations began in the early 1960s. The problem has worsened in recent years due to hurricane activity, particularly in the half-mile stretch of the channel nearest the island.

The park resorted to using 11-passenger skiffs to ferry visitors rather than its 40-foot, 28-passenger boats, yet ferry service was still interrupted



Dredge operates in narrow Cow Channel near Bear Island.

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TRUSTEES

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Trust Fund was not funded last year, but Gov. Mike Easley's current budget proposal includes \$6 million for the trust fund in 2007-08. That budget also includes another \$100 million for land acquisition to be channeled through the trust funds.

Collaboration and coordination are the aims of the joint meetings, said Bob Gordon, chairman of the Natural Heritage Trust Fund. Each fund has its own mission and process for selecting projects, but together the four offer a well-balanced program for land acquisition in the state, he said.

Phil Baddour, chairman of the Clean Water Management Trust Fund, reported that the trustees had agreed to stage one grant cycle per year instead of two and are working to improve review criteria for \$100 million per year in grants.

Chairman Jonathan Howes of the Parks and Recreation Authority said that trust fund awarded 55 grants for projects worth \$44 million, which leveraged almost \$27 million in local matching funds. There remains an unmet need for funding at the local level, he said.

Dewitt Hardee of the Agricultural and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund reported that the fund established a successful track record in 2005-06 with a pilot project funding five projects worth more than \$3 million.

Richard Rogers, assistant secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, used the occasion to describe the agency's strategic conservation plan.

The plan will identify, evaluate and set priorities for a network of ecosystems to coordinate conservation efforts over 25 years period, he said.

Without such planning, conservation efforts become haphazard and ineffective, Bill Jenkins of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency told the group. Jenkins was involved in developing Maryland's Green Infrastructure Assessment.

HAMMOCKS BEACH

during extremely low tides. School groups could not visit the island during the day and rangers became concerned about responding to emergencies there.

When the potential for emergency permits appeared, several departments acted at once.

The natural resources section under Brian Strong herded the permits through regulatory



Trustees at their second combined meeting.

The green infrastructure method identifies the interconnected network of natural areas and other open spaces that conserve natural ecosystem values and functions, and sustain clean air and water.

Jenkins said that North Carolina should begin its "story" by deciding what the state values and what should be achieved through such a plan.

After listening to Jenkins and Rogers, the trust fund leaders met in small groups to try to define elements that would make it more useful for the trust fund leadership.

Bill Ross, secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, told the combined group that although conservation funding is still outpaced by development in North Carolina, there have been some significant success stories.

Three of the conservation funds were involved in the pending acquisition of Chimney Rock Park to be added to a new state park at Hickory Nut Gorge. And, the state is in the process of buying much of 76,500 acres of land formerly owned by International Paper Corp. and being held by The Nature Conservancy.

Those successes are due largely to partnerships among the trust funds, the nonprofit conservation organizations, the Easley administration, the General Assembly and government agencies, Ross said.

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agencies. Park Superintendent Paul Donnelly and his staff began to plan for hosting large equipment on and near the island and for protecting potential nests of endangered sea turtles. And Bruce Garner and Glenn Sheppard in the design and development section coordinated with contractors Andrew Consulting Engineers of Wilmington and King Dredging of Beaufort.

HENDERSON: CONSERVATION GAINS FAVOR

People in North Carolina are much more willing to consider selling their land for conservation or for conservation easements than in past decades, according to one of the state's senior experts on land acquisition.

The state's visibly rapid growth is the principal reason, said Joe Henderson, who retired in April as director of the State Property Office.

"There's a much better understanding, as the state grows, that there is a finite amount of land to be shared among all users. People are much more aware that we are losing open space at an alarming rate," Henderson said.

"The sentiments are far more in our favor than they used to be."

Henderson spent his 33-year career buying land for the state and approving acquisitions, including thousands of acres for the state parks and other conservation agencies.

In that time, conservation has come to be viewed as an option when heirs must sell family homesteads. At the same time, the state has gained trust among landowners as a buyer willing to pay fair market prices, Henderson said.

"In the old days, the view was, 'The state's going to take my land.' Now, typically it's, 'The state's going to protect my land for the future,'" he said.



During his 33-year career, Henderson was involved in buying much state park land.

Henderson joined the State Property Office in 1974 when it had about 10 employees and when state property agents were a fairly new idea. Prior to that, each agency would negotiate for land, before passing an acquisition proposal to the office for a last-minute review. Then came consideration by the legislature and the Council of State.

Henderson served as agent, manager, deputy director and acting director before being named director in 1996. The office now has a staff of 33.

Henderson was raised in New Bern and holds a bachelor's degree in business and economics from N.C. State University. He served a stint in the U.S. Air Force before joining state government.

With ideas of becoming an appraiser, he joined the fledgling State Property Office after learning there were no openings at the Department of Transportation.

Over the decades, the office gained new tools for negotiation, including computer-based GPS services and the development of conservation easements with their attending tax incentives.

On the other hand, some land that was once owned by farmers or small businesses came under the control of multi-layered corporations, and that complicates negotiations, he said.

Citizens have long been leery when government knocks on a door to buy land, but the State Property Office gradually built credibility by relying on independent, certified appraisers to determine price.

"We didn't go in and offer a price to haggle over. We've offered the appraised value," he said. "In the old days, if you really wanted to know what property was going for, you went to the barber-shop."



ADVANCED LAW ENFORCEMENT

Shederick Mole, left, superintendent at Jones Lake State Park, and Keith Nealson, ranger at William B. Umstead State Park, were presented advanced law enforcement certificates May 8 at a meeting of the Criminal Justice Education and Training Standards Commission.

GREENWOOD TO LEAD DISMAL SWAMP

Joy Greenwood has been promoted to park superintendent of the Dismal Swamp State Natural Area. She succeeds Henry Stokes, who retired in February.

A superintendent is the chief of operations and administration at a state park, state recreation area or state natural area with wide-ranging responsibilities for staffing, training, law enforcement, visitor services, natural resource protection and environmental education.

Greenwood is a native of Vernon, NJ and earned a bachelor's degree in biology from East Carolina University in 1993. After working as a seasonal employee with the N.C. Department of Agriculture, she joined the state parks system in 1998 as a ranger at Goose Creek

State Park. From 2001-05, she was a ranger at Pettigrew State Park. She has been a senior ranger at Dismal Swamp since May 2005.

Greenwood is a certi-

fied environmental educator and has advanced training in law enforcement and prescribed burning.

She is a physical fitness and CPR instructor for the parks system.

"In just a few months, Dismal Swamp State Natural Area will open to the public with a new visitor center and other amenities, and we expect



the park to develop quickly as a center of natural and cultural resource education," said Susan Tillotson, chief of operations for the parks system. "Joy's training, her experience at the park and her people skills will be invaluable, and I'm confident she will help Dismal Swamp realize its potential."

Greenwood said that the natural area will undergo some important changes in the near future, "I am excited about the chance to lead Dismal Swamp through its development. There will be so many wonderful things happening here including new opportunities for natural resource management and environmental education," she said.

The state parks system acquired the 14,344-acre natural area in 1974.

SHIMEL SUPERINTENDENT AT MEDOC

Veteran ranger Joe Shimel has been promoted to superintendent of Medoc Mountain State Park in Halifax County, according to the Division of Parks and Recreation. Shimel succeeds Lyndon Sutton, who was named superintendent of Cliffs of the Neuse State Park.

A superintendent is chief of operations and administration at a state park or state recreation area with wide-ranging responsibilities for staffing, training, law enforcement, visitor services, natural resource protection and environmental education.

Shimel has been a ranger at Carolina Beach State Park since June 2003. A native of Wilson County and a graduate of Beddingfield High School, he earned a bachelor's degree in

parks, recreation and tourism management at N.C. State University in 2000. Shimel worked as a seasonal employee at Falls Lake State Recreation Area for two years and joined the state parks system full-time at Falls Lake in May 2000.

At Carolina Beach, Shimel was the lead ranger for interpretation and education and for natural resource management. He is a certified environmental educator and has had specialized training in prescribed burning and holds an intermediate law enforcement certificate.

"Joe has developed a



broad range of skills in the state parks system, particularly in environmental education and natural resource management, and he will be a valuable asset to Medoc Mountain State Park," said Susan Tillotson, chief of operations for the parks system. "His skills and experience will be important as the park continues to grow in popularity."

Shimel said, "I am proud to be part of the state parks system and look forward to this new phase of my career. I am passionate about the division's mission and eager to use that passion and turn it into action that will benefit Medoc Mountain State Park."

Medoc Mountain was established in 1975 and now encompasses 2,385 acres. The park recorded 55,185 visits in 2006.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS

MONTHLY ATTENDANCE REPORT

APRIL, 2006

NC STATE PARK	April 2007	TOTAL YTD Apr-07	April 2006	TOTAL YTD Apr-06	% CHANGE (2007/2006) Apr YTD	
CABE	44,284	128,046	51,126	127,818	-13%	0%
CLNE	13,484	37,017	9,251	24,437	46%	51%
CRMO	36,582	126,700	39,343	118,037	-7%	7%
ENRI	32,035	100,690	30,450	91,507	5%	10%
FALA	113,801	196,757	81,541	167,287	40%	18%
FOFI	66,504	149,149	64,811	178,602	3%	-16%
FOMA	105,150	267,594	123,336	281,668	-15%	-5%
GOCR	15,906	46,484	15,680	44,461	1%	5%
GORG	9,430	23,559	6,295	14,711	50%	60%
HABE	8,274	24,825	10,731	28,596	-23%	-13%
HARI	2,617	8,409	0	0	-100%	-100%
HARO	42,299	104,165	42,278	97,768	0%	7%
JONE	6,018	12,859	3,478	13,150	73%	-2%
JORD	45,122	130,636	123,971	188,194	-64%	-31%
JORI	150,589	287,168	100,920	174,342	49%	65%
KELA	79,340	188,140	89,228	234,096	-11%	-20%
LAJA	30,083	82,146	44,588	101,778	-33%	-19%
LANO	40,560	127,443	47,397	137,361	-14%	-7%
LAWA	7,900	21,395	9,506	25,286	-17%	-15%
LURI	8,672	24,616	7,275	22,205	19%	11%
MEMI	13,592	44,652	20,810	53,610	-35%	-17%
MEMO	4,840	12,898	4,981	12,985	-3%	-1%
MOJE	4,376	19,908	4,383	14,878	-0%	34%
MOMI	12,176	23,877	13,888	17,683	-12%	35%
MOMO	37,480	100,660	35,640	78,442	5%	28%
NERI	2,827	11,849	17,804	34,672	-84%	-66%
OCMO	6,250	19,805	7,014	19,607	-11%	1%
PETT	6,648	19,892	8,126	19,958	-18%	-0%
PIMO	34,718	103,589	38,304	97,527	-9%	6%
RARO	10,285	32,541	10,778	31,619	-5%	3%
SILA	2,063	7,549	3,110	10,640	-34%	-29%
SOMO	0	42,575	20,406	56,482	-100%	-25%
STMO	37,160	110,076	41,688	99,512	-11%	11%
WEWO	3,568	16,527	4,175	15,402	-15%	7%
WIUM	52,541	183,328	62,956	182,823	-17%	0%
SYSTEMWIDE TOTAL	1,087,174	2,837,524	1,195,268	2,817,144	-9%	1%



Our Mission Remains...

to protect North Carolina's natural diversity;
to provide and promote outdoor recreation
opportunities throughout North Carolina;
to exemplify and encourage good stewardship
of North Carolina's natural resources for all
citizens and visitors.

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SAFETY ZONE

SAFELY DONE MAKES SUMMER MORE FUN

✓Protect against sun exposure by wearing a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses and applying sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 on exposed skin.

✓See your doctor if you develop skin irregularities such as an unusual mole, scaly patch or sore.

✓Keep arms and legs covered when outdoors in wooded areas to protect against ticks and poisonous plants.

✓Be sure to drink plenty of water when exercising or working outdoors.

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